

**GUIDANCE FOR PUBLIC HOUSING AGENCIES IN ASSISTING  
FAMILIES DISPLACED BY HURRICANE KATRINA**

Attached is a set of questions and answers related to the housing choice voucher program and the public housing program raised by housing authorities, HUD field staff and disaster victims. This information is being provided to assist public housing agencies in addressing the needs of families affected by Hurricane Katrina.

If public housing agencies or field staff have any further question they should be called in to the Information Resource Center at 1-800-955-2232.

**Issued by:     Office of the Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing  
                  Office of Public Housing and Voucher Program  
                  September 13, 2005**

	Program	Topic	Question	Answer	
1	PH and HCV	Admin Fees	May PHAs use voucher administrative fees and administrative fee reserves to assist public housing displacees as well as voucher program displacees?	FY04 and FY 05 earned administrative fees by law cannot be used to assist public housing displacees and may only be used for voucher displacees. Pre-2004 PHA earned administrative fee reserves may be used to assist both public housing and voucher program displacees.	
2	PH and HCV	Admission	What happens if a voucher or public housing recipient is not the head of the household, and the head of the household is either missing or located somewhere else? What happens if additional family members are brought in with the initial family?	Remaining members of an assisted family are considered a family. As to additional members, a PHA can make the determination as to whether the members may be included in the family.	
3	PH and HCV	Available Units	Where can owners call who want to make their properties available to public housing/HCV residents?	Owners should call the PHA in the jurisdiction.	
4	PH and HCV	Coordination with Other Federal Agencies	Where can displaced families that need services get help?	Families should call FEMA, Salvation Army, or Red Cross. PHAs with ROSS or HOPE VI grants may also use such funds to provide supportive services.	
5	PH and HCV	Eligibility	Can PHAs or HUD offices have access to the PIC system to verify status?	PHAs and selected field offices have access to the PIC system. However, PHAs and HUD offices should call REAC at 1-888-245-4860 to obtain verification regarding the status of persons who indicate they are receiving housing assistance from a PHA. See guidance below.	
6	PH and HCV	Eligibility	How does a PHA determine if the family was an existing public housing or voucher program participant at a disaster-impacted PHA?	For current voucher participants and current public housing residents, the receiving PHA can call HUD at 1-888-245-4860 to verify that the family is a participant by matching the SSN or family name with PIC-50058 data. The resource center is only a resource to confirm public housing and voucher participants for non-functioning PHAs and can only verify information that is available in PIC.  For new families displaced by the disaster who were not receiving voucher or public housing assistance, it is expected that the family will need to provide the PHA with documentation that they are from the area impacted by the disaster. The FEMA webpage lists the impacted areas. The family is permitted to self-declare income and family status so admission is not delayed.	
7	PH and HCV	Income and Rent Verification	How will PHAs conduct income verification and rent determination for displaced families?	PHAs should use normal processes but are permitted to utilize tenant-supplied documentation or tenant declarations for up to 90 days before conducting a full income verification and rent determination.	

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8	PH and HCV	Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)	Will there be any relief from LIHTC requirements?	Treasury Department and IRS have waived the normal income requirements associated with the LIHTC program so that owners of tax credit properties can provide housing to victims of Hurricane Katrina who do not qualify as low-income. However, tax credit units that are also section 8 or public housing units must continue to abide by the low-income requirements of those programs. A link to the Treasury Department press release regarding this waiver can be found at: <a href="http://www.treas.gov/press/releases/is2698.htm">http://www.treas.gov/press/releases/is2698.htm</a>	
9	PH and HCV	PHA Salaries	Is there going to be any additional funding available for additional office and salary expenses or for other unanticipated costs?	PHAs with operating subsidy or operating reserves can use those funds to pay for additional office and salary expenses or other unanticipated costs related to operating the PHA or its public housing projects. With regard to costs related to the section 8 program (or the public housing program for those PHAs without operating subsidy or reserve), the only funds available are the \$1.3 million in special administrative fees under PIH Notice 2005-18. HUD is developing the protocol for distributing these funds. These funds may also be used for security deposits, utility deposits, and transportation expenses related to relocation.	
10	PH and HCV	Preferences	Can PHAs give a preference to public housing residents and voucher participants affected by the disaster?	Yes, PHAs with a voucher or public housing program are encouraged to adopt an admission preference for public housing residents and voucher participants displaced by the disaster. See guidance below.	
11	PH and HCV	Preferences	Can PHAs give preference to disaster area residents who are not currently a Public Housing resident or voucher holder but who are determined program eligible?	Yes, the PHA may provide for an admission preference for unassisted disaster families.	
12	HCV Only	Admin Fees	May PHAs use their housing voucher program administrative fees to pay for security deposits, utility deposits, or transportation expenses for housing voucher families displaced by Hurricane Katrina?	Yes. PHAs may use funds from PHA administrative fees and PHA administrative fee reserves to assist housing voucher families displaced by Hurricane Katrina with security deposits, utility deposits, or transportation expenses relating to relocation.	
13	HCV Only	Admission	What is the admissions process for a portable voucher family? Can a PHA choose not to issue vouchers to local applicants in order to absorb incoming portable voucher families from disaster areas?	The assistance for a family affected by a disaster is administered by a receiving PHA under existing portability procedures. A PHA may always choose to use available voucher funding to absorb portability families and does not place these families on the waiting list first. See guidance below.	
14	HCV Only	Eligibility	Should PHAs notify current voucher waiting list applicants of their intent to provide a local preference for voucher assistance to disaster-impacted families?	No. There is no HUD requirement for PHAs to notify waiting list applicants of changes in local preferences for admission to the voucher program. See guidance below.	

	Program	Topic	Question	Answer	
15	HCV Only	Funding for Rehab	Is HUD making funds available to private citizens who want to rehab housing for disaster victims?	No.	
16	HCV Only	Homeownership	Can PHAs continue to make payments for homeownership units that were demolished or seriously damaged by the Hurricane?	Yes, PHAs may continue making payments under the homeownership option of the voucher program. The PHA may continue such payments while the family completes repairs with proceeds from its insurance policy or sells the property. A family cannot receive benefits as a renter and homeowner at the same time. Homeowner's with FHA-insured homes should contact their lender to determine what are the best options for the family.	
17	HCV Only	HQS	May a PHA make housing assistance payments under a HAP contract without conducting an HQS inspection with the understanding that the inspection will be conducted at a later date?	No. By law, a PHA cannot make housing assistance payments until the unit is inspected and satisfies HQS. However, if a PHA wants to take the risk, it may allow a family to move into a unit in anticipation of the unit passing HQS. In such cases, the unit must be inspected and the HAP contract must be executed and retroactive payments made within a time period not to exceed 60 days.	
18	HCV Only	Lease Terms	Can PHAs provide lease terms of less than one year?	Yes, if shorter term is the prevailing local market practice and it will improve housing opportunities for the family.	
19	HCV Only	Portability	Can a receiving PHA admit additional family members to a portable voucher family or must the family composition remain as it was under the disaster-impacted PHA's program?	The receiving PHA has the authority to approve the family composition for the incoming portable family.	
20	HCV Only	Portability	Is the PHA required to determine income eligibility for an incoming voucher family moving under portability?	No. If a family is a voucher participant, the receiving PHA does not determine income eligibility. However, for a portable family that was issued a voucher but never leased a unit, the family must be determined income eligible in the receiving PHA's jurisdiction (e.g., the receiving PHA's income limits are applicable).	
21	HCV Only	Portability	May the receiving PHA bill? How does the receiving PHA submit billing information and receive billing reimbursement for non-functioning PHAs?	Receiving PHAs that assist incoming disaster portability families may bill for HAP and 80% of the receiving PHA's on-going administrative fee. HUD will soon establish a portability billing processing system to cover the role of the initial PHA for non-functioning PHAs.	
22	HCV Only	Portability	What is the process for assisting an incoming voucher family porting from the disaster impacted area?	If the initial PHA is functioning, the receiving PHA will contact that PHA and follow the normal portability procedures. If the family is from an initial PHA that is non-functioning, the receiving PHA will contact REAC at 1-888-245-4860 and request verification of family participation. See guidance below.	
23	HCV Only	SEMAP	Will HUD provide relief (i.e., exempt PHAs) from the requirements of SEMAP for PHAs affected by the hurricane?	Yes. HUD will issue a notice identifying the conditions pursuant to which PHAs may request a waiver for exemptions from SEMAP. The notice will also provide some consideration for non-affected PHAs holding vouchers back for a limited period of time to assist displaced families.	

	Program	Topic	Question	Answer	
24	PH Only	Admission	Are PHAs required to post changes to its administrative policies?	Yes. Preferences and other such policies must be posted in the PHA's admission office and provided to residents, upon request. Such actions need not occur before the disaster victims are admitted to the public housing program.	
25	PH Only	Admission	Can a PHA temporarily house over-income disaster victims in a public housing unit and temporarily hold off on housing eligible applicants on the waiting list?	No, the Department's first priority is to assist existing public housing and voucher program participants who have been affected by Hurricane Katrina. The only exception is for PHAs with less than 250 units. Such PHAs may, on a monthly basis, lease a unit in a public housing project to an over-income disaster family, but only if there are no eligible families applying for housing assistance for the PHA for that month and the PHA provides not less than a 30-day public notice of such assistance. If the unit is vacant and there is no one on the waiting list, the PHA may allow an over-income family to gain immediate occupancy in the unit while simultaneously providing reasonable public notice and outreach with regard to the availability of the unit. For PHAs with more than 250 units, vacant public housing units can be temporarily deprogrammed and made available for temporary occupancy by disaster victims without regard to income. These units would not receive operating subsidy during the period which they are deprogrammed for use by disaster victims.	
26	PH Only	Admission	Should PHAs notify current public housing waiting list applicants of their intent to provide a local preference for voucher assistance to disaster-impacted families?	If the PHA's waiting list is closed, the PHA needs to open the waiting list to accept applications only from disaster victims. The PHA must notify applicants on the waiting list of the change in preference categories. This can be done by publication of a notice in the newspaper. PHAs must use best efforts to implement notification to all tenants but such actions should not delay addressing urgent housing needs.	
27	PH Only	Evictions	What about standards for terminating or evicting, when a PHA may not be able to get landlord, credit or criminal background checks for awhile?	There is no change to the standards for terminations or evictions. However, PHAs may need to change their standards for criminal record and rent history verifications. Because of the national emergency, NCIC is making some exceptions to policy to help the states accommodate identification of the evacuees. The states will be able to make queries to request criminal histories (RAP sheets). These will return criminal history from all states. Local and state law enforcement officials are able to submit such queries. Contact William McKenzie, FBI/NCIC, at 304-625-2800 for additional assistance.	
28	PH Only	Funding	May PHAs use their capital funds to pay for security deposits, utility deposits, or transportation expenses for displaced public housing residents?	Yes. PHAs may use capital funds for relocation costs for public housing residents if they are related to the potential future modernization or demolition or development of public housing units. To the extent that the family's accommodations require higher security deposits, the additional deposit can be paid from capital funds. In addition the costs of moving public housing families and their belongings also may be paid from capital funds.	
29	PH Only	Health and Safety	Can tenants stay in water damaged public housing units?	No, it is not safe to stay in homes that have been flooded. See <a href="http://www.hud.gov/news/release.cfm?content=pr04-087.cfm">http://www.hud.gov/news/release.cfm?content=pr04-087.cfm</a>	

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30	PH Only	Operating Funds	Can PHA Staff volunteer?	PHA employees can on their own time (e.g., weekends, annual leave) volunteer their services to another PHA. The receiving PHA can use operating subsidy to pay the volunteers a nominal fee and to provide reasonable benefits (e.g., shelter, food) in connection with the volunteer activities.	
31	PH Only	Operating Funds	Can PHAs donate goods and service to relief efforts?	Under applicable cost principles PHAs cannot use grant funds as part of a contribution or donation. PHAs cannot simply donate services, goods, or labor to another PHA without remuneration. A PHA cannot use its funds for expenditures for another PHA because the use of the funds must be in connection with its projects and public housing families. There are no provisions that would exempt disaster relief from this prohibition. PHAs that want to provide services of their staff, goods or equipment can do so under the following conditions. The "sending" PHA and "receiving" PHA should enter into an agreement to cover issues related to costs. The agreement should set out which agency will pay for travel costs and other related costs (shelter, food, etc.). The receiving PHA should provide remuneration to the sending PHA for the services, goods and labor. The agreement should cover how such costs would be allocated.	
32	PH Only	PHAS	Will HUD give consideration on the vacancy PHAS performance rating to PHAs who hold their current vacant units for a period of time in anticipation of housing displaced families?	Yes. HUD will issue a Notice identifying the basis for exempting PHAs affected by the disaster from PHAS rating for FY 2005 and will provide some consideration for non-affected PHAs holding back units for a limited period of time to assist displaced families.	
33	PH Only	Procurement Issues	What are HUD's PHA procurement policies to meet disaster needs?	24 CFR 85.36 permits PHA to procure from single source through noncompetitive proposals. PHA can use single source when award is infeasible under small purchase, sealed bids or competitive proposals and item is available only from single source or public exigency or emergency for the requirement will not permit a delay from competitive solicitation. PHAs must maintain in their files, however, rationale of the single source proposal and cost analysis, i.e., proposed cost data, cost projections, evaluation of specific elements of cost and profits. Labor costs are what they are if you can find people to do the work.	
34	PH Only	ROSS Grants	Can ROSS funds currently under NOFA be redirected to PHAs providing assistance to families impacted by Katrina for services such as counseling, transportation, food?	No. ROSS funds must be used for supportive service activities for their public housing residents and that the PHA applied for and that were approved in their grant agreement. Food is an ineligible item in ROSS grants.	
35	PH Only	ROSS Grants	Can some of the ROSS funds currently under NOFA be redirected for housing assistance?	No. The appropriation language will not allow ROSS funds to be used for housing assistance.	

## Hurricane Katrina

## Frequently Asked Questions

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Program	Topic	Question	Answer
		<b>Assistance to Disaster-Affected Families for Public Housing and Voucher Programs (revised 9-9-05)</b>	
		<b>Priority: The Department's first priority is to assist existing public housing and voucher program participants who have been affected by Hurricane Katrina. Once that need is met, PHAs may begin serving other disaster victims who are non-participants.</b>	
		<p>A PHA may use its own available public housing units to assist either displaced public housing or voucher participants affected by the disaster. A PHA may also use available vouchers to admit displaced public housing residents to its voucher program.</p>	
		<p>In either case, if the PHA does not already provide such a preference, it must amend its Administrative Plan and/or Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy (ACOP) to specify a preference for a disaster-affected family.</p>	
		<p>The amendment to the Administrative Plan or ACOP must be approved by the Board. The Executive Director should have the amendment written to specify that families of federally declared disasters who are Section 8 voucher holders or public housing residents in another jurisdiction will receive preference over other waiting list placeholders for public housing, and that displaced public housing residents will receive preference over other waiting list families for admission to the voucher program. Once written, and it need only be a few sentences, the PHA may convene a conference call with all the members of the board and ask the Board to approve the amendment. (Please note that it is HUD's recommendation that the PHA's Board not consider the amendment as "significant" to the PHA Plan. Should the Board consider the amendment as "significant" to the PHA Plan, then a formal notice to the public must be prepared and public meeting advertised and held.) Once approved, the PHA may then immediately admit disaster victims using its own resources. Please remember that these are federal guidelines. PHAs must ensure that they have complied with individual state or local requirements above and beyond the federal requirements such as the Open Meetings Act or similar state law.</p>	
		<p>If a prior program participant arrives at a PHA requesting assistance, the PHA will verify their current eligibility by calling the Real Estate Assessment Center at (888) 245-4860 and asking REAC to verify the family's participation. This number can also be used to get answers to other disaster-related policy questions. This number is for PHAs only and not for tenants to call. Tenants should call the Information Resource Center at (800) 955-2232.</p>	
		<p>REAC will also accept faxes from PHAs if they have more than one participant to verify. PHAs may fax the family information to any of the following fax numbers:</p>	
		<p>202-485-0280</p>	
		<p>202-485-0288</p>	
		<p>202-485-0284</p>	
		<p>202-485-0274</p>	
		<p>202-485-0275</p>	
		<p>202-485-0276</p>	



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Program	Topic	Question	Answer
		<b><u>Displaced Voucher Program Participants:</u></b>	
		<b><u>Portability</u></b>	
		A voucher family may move to any jurisdiction that has a PHA that administers a Section 8 voucher program and receive voucher assistance under the portability procedures of the program.	
		If the incoming portability voucher family arrives without any documentation, to verify their program status, the PHA will obtain the name and SSN of the Head of Household of the family. The PHA will verify the current eligibility by calling the Real Estate Assessment Center at (888) 245-4860 and asking REAC to verify the family's participation in the voucher program. REAC will verify the family's participation by transmitting an acknowledgment form (attached) and the PIC 50058 from PIC. Where the data cannot be verified with the existing information by REAC, the PHA may accept alternate documentation that demonstrates the tenant's participation in the program.	
		Under portability, the family will receive the subsidy amount determined in accordance with the program regulations. The receiving PHA may choose to either absorb the family into their own program or choose to bill. In some cases the receiving PHA may have a higher payment standard than the disaster-impacted PHA and bills for the actual housing assistance payment amount. For example, a family coming in from New Orleans may have a payment standard that is \$600 and moves to Atlanta where the payment standard is \$800. Atlanta may absorb the family or may bill for the actual housing assistance payment paid on behalf of the family that is based on the \$800 payment standard.	
		The Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) is currently setting up accounting operations to be able to pay portability billings on a timely manner. Other PHAs affected by Katrina are currently re-establishing their own operations. In the case where PHAs may be non-functional for a protracted period of time, HUD will establish an alternative portability processing and billing system for the impacted PHAs. Further instructions will be issued shortly on where to bill.	
		<b>Do not let portability billings get in the way of providing vouchers to displaced voucher holders from any of the PHAs affected by Katrina. The Department will make sure that PHAs are paid for legitimate ports from affected PHAs.</b>	
		In the event the annual recertification date cannot be determined, the 12-month period will begin on the date the unit is leased. Once the receiving PHA accepts the family all normal PHA procedures will be followed including HQS inspections, etc.	
		Field Offices who have been performing the certification functions to date must refer PHAs to the REAC and must mail the completed certification forms to the REAC to the attention of Elizabeth Hanson.	
		PIH will post Frequently Asked Questions related to the Katrina disaster on its website. Further information will be provided as to the website location, shortly.	